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AUTHOR Oliaro, Paul, Ed.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

Major activities of the alcohol education program at Michigan State University are described, with focus on the assessment and program formulation process, staff training needed to implement the program, the kinds of alcohol education activities that can be conducted, and the role of evaluation and research in improving alcohol education efforts. Assessment was designed to determine the institutional climate as it related to alcohol misuse and involved evaluation of evidence of student problems and potential for problems. Program development involved gathering information about the alcohol abuse problem from local and federal agencies. State funding resulted in residence hall staff training and in the establishment of a central office for information on alcohol use and misuse. Training not only provided information about alcohol use and misuse but was designed to help the staff identify, confront, and assist individuals involved in alcohol abuse. A training model was structured to use large group sessions for general information-sharing and small group meetings for skills practice and experiential programs. The training model, which also addresses legal issues regarding alcohol use, is outlined. Alcohol education activities that were undertaken at the overall campus and individual residence hall levels are also outlined. Evaluation activities included surveys on awareness of alcohol use and abuse, information about alcohol, attitudes regarding alcohol, and awareness of alcohol education activities. Ninety percent of the students indicated that they drink, and 60 percent acknowledged that they knew other students with drinking problems. (SW)

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THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ALCOHOL EDUCATION PROJECT

FOR RESIDENT STUDENTS

Edited by: Paul Oliaro

Contributing Authors: Dawn Hecker,
Dennis O'Har
Bonnie Olson
Doug Torren

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Appendix III-7

The Michigan State University Alcohol Education Project

For Resident Students

Edited by: Paul Oliaro

Contributing Authors: Dawn Hecker, Dennis O'Har
Bonnie Olson, Doug Torren

In 1972, with the change in the age of majority, colleges and universities in Michigan got their first taste of what has grown to be a significant problem with alcohol abuse. Michigan State University was no exception. The problem was most evident within our residence halls, which have a very large and easily observable population. This population is also the most accessible and easily approached due to our advisory staff network which extends throughout our 37 halls. For that reason, it is on this population that our alcohol education efforts have been concentrated. Within our residence hall system, we have been fortunate to have a concerned group of staff and students who have been very interested in taking a closer look at the alcohol abuse problem and in trying to formulate responses designed to cope with it. The program described here is a result of their collaborative efforts.

This article will highlight the major activities of the alcohol education program at Michigan State during the last three years. In doing so, we have taken several major excerpts from a recent issue of a regional monograph sponsored by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)[1] on alcohol education that was prepared by several staff from Michigan State. This should provide an historical look at the assessment and program formulation process, the staff training that is needed to implement the program, the kinds of alcohol education activities that can be conducted and the role of evaluation and research in improving alcohol education efforts. Our program model (see figure 1) is provided to offer a visual depiction of the various components of our program. The narrative description of those components will follow.

ASSESSMENT

By 1974, at Michigan State University, alcohol abuse by students was a growing concern. On MSU's campus, drinking was permitted by policy, encouraged by the social atmosphere, and virtually expected by peers. The legal drinking age in Michigan had recently been lowered to 18 and the campus alcohol policies permitted consumption of alcohol in residence hall rooms, suites, and apartments. In addition, student groups could "register" parties and hold them in study lounges, floor living areas, designated party rooms, and various other parts of our residence halls. The resulting situation was one of relative widespread, condoned consumption of alcohol. The average weekend saw one or two registered floor parties per hall, each attended by 50 to 150 students. Typically, a hall party was held once a term and attended by 200-300 residents. In-room parties, not subject to registration under the campus alcohol policy, were held more frequently. This increased consumption of liquor on campus contributed to a number of alcohol-related problems which were manifested in several ways. In a number of halls, staff grew increasingly concerned about damage, noise, fights and personal abuse coincident with high alcohol consumption. The head resident advisor in a small women's hall noticed a more covert problem--residents drinking alone in their rooms on weekends. In a large coed hall, students and staff alike reacted with alarm to an incident of respiratory failure associated with alcohol consumption. A Committee on Intelligent Drinking was formed in that hall to begin educating students on alcohol use and abuse.

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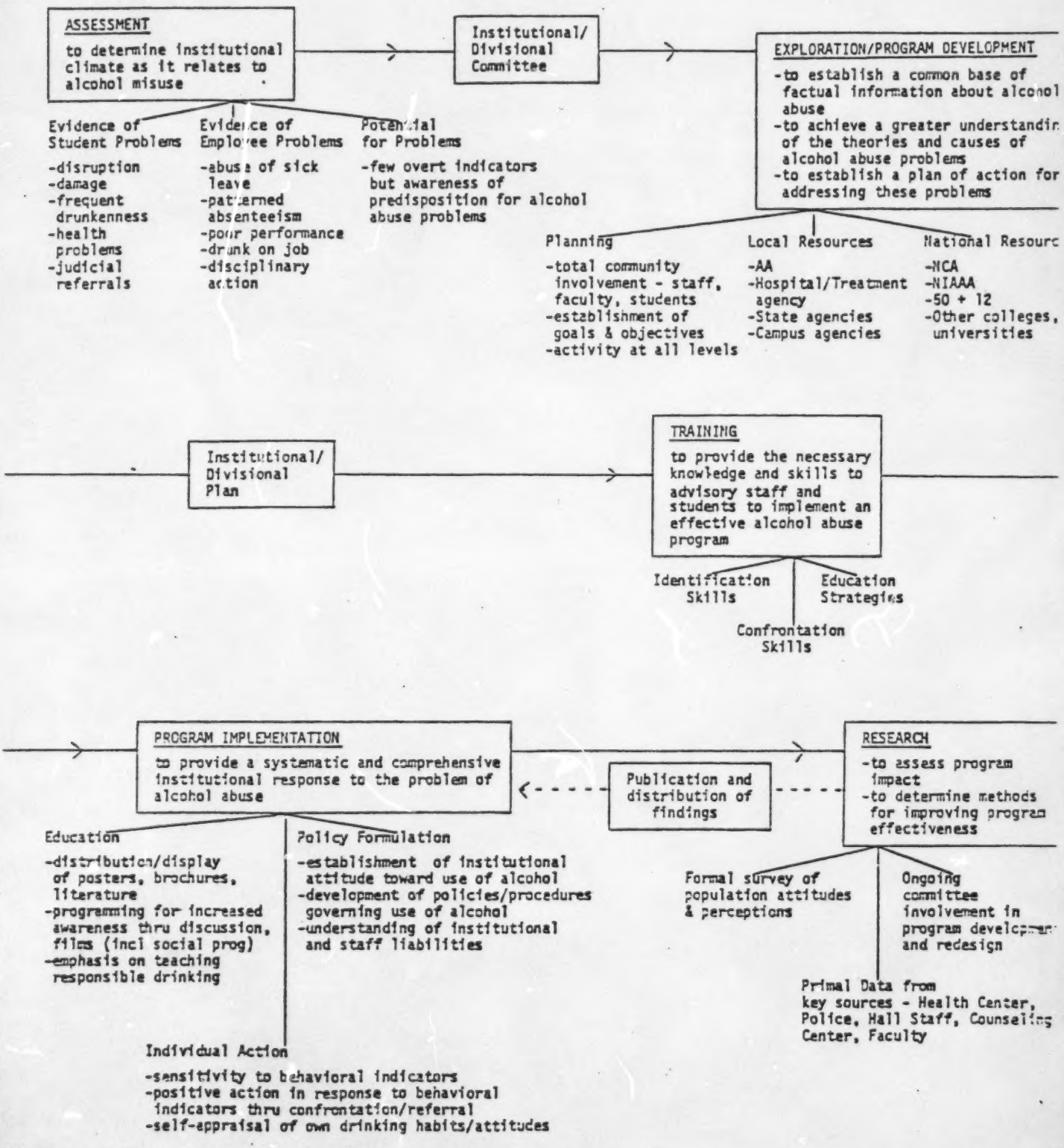
[1] Alcohol Education for College Student Personnel, Gary North, Editor, a publication of NASPA, Region IV-East; Fall, 1977

Figure 1

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY - DIVISION OF RESIDENCE HALL PROGRAMS - ALCOHOL EDUCATION OFFICE

MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTATION


ASSESSMENT
to determine institutional climate as it relates to alcohol misuse
Institutional/ Divisional Committee
EXPLORATION/PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
-to establish a common base of factual information about alcohol abuse
-to achieve a greater understandin of the theories and causes of alcohol abuse problems
-to establish a plan of action for addressing these problems
Evidence of Student Problems
-disruption
-damage
-frequent drunkenness
-health problems
-judicial referrals
Evidence of Employee Problems
-abuse of sick leave
-patterned absenteeism
-poor performance
-drunk on job
-disciplinary action
Potential for Problems
-few overt indicators but awareness of predisposition for alcohol abuse problems
Planning
-total community involvement - staff, faculty, students
-establishment of goals & objectives
-activity at all levels
Local Resources
-AA
-Hospital/Treatment agency
-State agencies
-Campus agencies
National Resourc
-NCA
-NIAAA
-50 + 12
-Other colleges, universities
Institutional/ Divisional Plan
TRAINING
to provide the necessary knowledge and skills to advisory staff and students to implement an effective alcohol abuse program
Identification Skills
Education Strategies
Confrontation Skills
PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION
to provide a systematic and comprehensive institutional response to the problem of alcohol abuse
Publication and distribution of findings
RESEARCH
-to assess program impact
-to determine methods for improving program effectiveness
Education
-distribution/display of posters, brochures, literature
-programming for increased awareness thru discussion, films (incl social prog)
-emphasis on teaching responsible drinking
Policy Formulation
-establishment of institutional attitude toward use of alcohol
-development of policies/procedures governing use of alcohol
-understanding of institutional and staff liabilities
Formal survey of population attitudes & perceptions
Ongoing committee involvement in program development and redesign
Primal Data from key sources - Health Center, Police, Hall Staff, Counseling Center, Faculty
Individual Action
-sensitivity to behavioral indicators
-positive action in response to behavioral indicators thru confrontation/referral
-self-appraisal of own drinking habits/attitudes

Some staff seemed reluctant to verbalize their concern, and many individuals assumed they were the only ones experiencing difficulty or having a concern for the problem. A number of staff attempted individual program efforts to treat the problem; however, the results were limited.

As the system-wide concern for alcohol abuse problems became more apparent, the Director of Residence Hall Programs invited staff and students to share their concerns and ideas for initial program efforts. From these group discussions, an Alcohol Education Committee was formed to approach the problem more systematically. An assessment was made of other offices and departments on campus working with students on health-related matters (i.e., Counseling Center, Health Center, Public Safety) and it was discovered that they were also becoming concerned about the increase in student alcohol abuse. Therefore, representatives from these offices became interested and involved in the Committee's efforts.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Initially, there was strong verbal support but limited funding for the Alcohol Education Committee's work. In addition, there was no single individual responsible for directing the Committee's activities, and a great deal of time was spent determining appropriate goals for its efforts. Thus, a Residence Hall Area Director was assigned the primary task of chairing the Committee and, based on input from Committee members, the group defined several areas toward which its efforts would be directed. They included: research into the alcohol abuse problem, programming to educate students, training for staff, and identification of local and national resources. Committee members divided into sub-groups to cover these areas and gather existing information and develop new materials.

Local agencies, such as the State of Michigan Office of Substance Abuse Services, the National Council on Alcoholism, a local hospital with an Alcoholism Unit and several members of the Alcoholics Anonymous community provided important information and much needed assistance in helping the Committee to learn about the alcohol abuse problem. The federal agency on alcoholism and alcohol abuse (NIAAA) also served as a good source of informational materials, pamphlets and posters. However, for each of these agencies the problem of alcohol abuse on campus was a relatively new one and approaches and methods for addressing the issue were yet to be developed. This was before the publication of NIAAA's very useful publication, The Whole College Catalogue About Drinking. It soon became apparent that the scope of the topic, the size of our campus and the necessary quality of any effort to deal with the issues of alcohol use and abuse on campus would require more attention than could be given by an all-volunteer group.

As a result, during the summer of 1975, a Committee member was employed by the Director of Residence Hall Programs to write a grant proposal to secure financial support for the project. A grant was obtained from the State of Michigan Attorney General's Public Health Trust Fund, and the Alcohol Education Project was begun. This grant provided sufficient support to hire a 3/4-time program coordinator who was assisted by a department-funded 1/4-time graduate assistant training specialist. This provided the project with two individuals who could devote all their attention to coordinating the efforts of the Committee to meet the goals of the project. Those goals included:

- To provide a central office for information on the topic of alcohol use and misuse for staff and students in our residence hall system;

- To provide residence hall staff with training, ideas and resources for conducting alcohol education/abuse prevention activities within their individual halls;

- To provide training for staff in identifying, confronting and referring individuals with alcohol-related problems;

- To publicize to students information on the topic of responsible drinking and to encourage the promotion of the concept that not drinking is as acceptable as drinking.

TRAINING

Training of residence hall staff has been of fundamental importance to the accomplishment of these goals. The importance of training stems from the expectation that staff members: 1) be aware of and informed about alcohol use and abuse on campus and 2) be able to identify, confront, and assist individuals involved in alcohol abuse. To meet the training needs of residence hall staffs, an Alcohol Education Training Model has been designed. The model is structured to make use of large group sessions for general information sharing and small group meetings for skills practice and experiential programs.

Specific training sessions in confronting the alcohol abuser have become part of the in-service training of RA staffs at Michigan State. The Confrontation program includes a lecturette on the definition, purpose, elements, and antecedents of confrontation as well as a demonstration of the skill, with special attention given to the conditions surrounding the confronter, the person(s) being confronted, and the techniques involved. This skill practice session generally concludes with a discussion of problem cases and a distribution of a Confrontation Guidelines handout.

The following model can be used as a "broad-brush" all-day workshop, and/or individual elements of the model can be used separately or in combination with other elements to meet the specific training needs of the staff.

ALCOHOL EDUCATION TRAINING MODEL

I. Introduction

   A. Greeting and explanation of program goals and methods
   B. Lecturette on the impact of alcohol abuse
   C. Identification of myths and facts regarding alcohol

II. Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism--the Alcoholic

   A. Explanation of the nature and progression of alcoholism
   B. Presentation of personal insights to the feelings, motivation, and perceptions of an alcoholic

III. Legal Issues Regarding Alcohol Use

   A. Explanation of major legal considerations regarding alcohol use for students and administrators
   B. Clarification of responsibilities and legal liabilities regarding laws and policies concerned with alcohol use
   C. Presentation of considerations and suggestions for development and/or review of an institution's existing alcohol-related policies

IV. Confrontation of the Alcohol Abuser

A. Explanation of principles, elements, and techniques in confrontation
B. Demonstration of confrontation skills through group role play
C. Discussion and practice of confrontation skills

V. Alcohol Awareness Exercises

A. Presentation of value clarification exercises, films, slide presentations, and articles designed to stimulate discussion regarding alcohol use and abuse
B. Description of a creative program exercise designed to produce a workable alcohol awareness program

VI. Alcohol Programming and Resources

A. Presentation of suggestions for alcohol education programming
B. Panel discussion concerning factors involved in planning and coordinating alcohol education programs
C. Identification of national and local resources for alcohol information, advertisements, and treatment

VII. Conclusions

A. Summation of major elements in an alcohol education project
B. Presentation of ideas on how to develop an alcohol education committee

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Through 1) the establishment of an Alcohol Education Office to serve as a central clearinghouse for information on alcohol use and abuse; 2) the Alcohol Education Committee developing and sharing ideas for alcohol education at the hall level; and 3) ongoing training being conducted for advisory staff on the topic of alcohol abuse, the actual implementation of our program has been able to focus on two levels. The first is the all-campus level as a means of providing general information to all residence hall staff and students. The second is at the individual hall or floor level, providing more specific opportunities for residents to learn about alcohol use and abuse and to examine their own attitudes and behavior regarding their own drinking.

The following offers a description of some of the alcohol education activities that have taken place at the all-campus and individual hall levels to promote the philosophy and purposes of our Alcohol Education Program.

<u>At Campus Level</u>

- Information brochures developed by the Committee for campus-wide distribution
- Alcohol education information put in freshment Orientation Week packets
- TV program and radio program with Alcohol Education Committee members
- Periodic informational/attitudinal surveys conducted across campus
- Alcohol education training for all advisory staff on an area/complex or individual hall basis
- Development of an Alcohol Education Resource Manual and a manual designed for RAs on Alcohol Education
- Alcohol Education display case set up in prominent location in the Student Services Building

- Production of a 15-minute slide-tape program on alcohol education
- Establishment of a weekly on-campus AL-ANON meeting for students with drinking problems. There are already several AA meetings held each week on campus.
- Periodic articles in the campus newspaper on Alcohol Abuse, Alcoholism and responsible drinking
- Resource Fairs held (with University service agencies), involving representatives from the Alcohol Education Office

At Hall Level

- Wide variety of hall educational programs utilizing films, peer group discussions and recovering alcoholics as resource people/speakers
- Posters/pamphlets/brochures disseminated to residents
- Information items in each hall's weekly Manager's Newsletter
- Individual hall alcohol education committees have been started, comprised of hall students and staff
- Increasing number of non-alcohol social programs (i.e., root beer float parties, banana split parties)
- Bulletin boards put up on alcohol education
- Wine and cheese parties with speaker on responsible drinking
- Mixology/bar-tending demonstrations with a responsible drinking theme
- A breath-alyzer machine was set up in conjunction with a hall alcohol party to make people more aware of their own limits in alcohol consumption
- Programs on the impact of alcohol on male-female relationships have also been popular

In addition to these individual projects, the campus alcohol policy has been modified to require that at any registered alcohol party at least 25% of the beverages purchased must be non-alcoholic. This change has been particularly effective in promoting the idea that not drinking is acceptable in the college peer group and it seems to have provided those who do drink an alternative beverage so that they do not have to drink just alcohol all evening. The response to this policy has been generally positive.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

We recognize that the true impact of education/prevention efforts is always difficult to gauge empirically and that it is particularly difficult to determine possible effects on behavior change. However, we have sought to gather information on the visibility of our efforts and the perceived quality of those efforts from both staff and students. One of the methods for doing this has been to keep an account of the kinds of activities that have been conducted, the number of pamphlets and brochures disseminated and the number of requests for information/assistance handled by the Alcohol Education Office. We have also sought to review statistical data on the number of alcohol-related offenses on campus, medical problems related to alcohol abuse, damage incidents that are alcohol-related and similar kinds of data which may not be related in a causal manner to our program but may help to demonstrate trends in alcohol-related problems on campus. In addition, we have tried to design paper and pencil survey instruments on alcohol education so that

they are not only informational to us but also to the person filling them out. Thus, they can serve as another subtle method for reaching students with information on the topic of alcohol use and abuse. The results of these surveys have provided much useful information.

Two questionnaires were distributed during the winter and spring terms of the 1976 academic year. A third expanded survey was administered to students during the spring of 1977. Another survey evaluating the impact of the Alcohol Education Project was administered to the residence hall advisory staff in the spring of 1976 and 1977. Generally, the surveys followed four main focus points: awareness of alcohol use and abuse, information about alcohol, attitudes regarding alcohol, and awareness of alcohol education activities.

The MSU residence hall system includes five geographic areas housing 18,000 students, primarily freshmen and sophomores. The response rates, as well as completeness of individual responses, varied significantly based on the emphasis accorded Alcohol Education in each area. The response rate for the three random sample student surveys was approximately 50 percent.

Ninety percent of the students said they did drink, and 60 percent of the respondents acknowledged that they knew other students with drinking problems. Over 83 percent felt comfortable talking about their own drinking behaviors with others, but 40 percent said they would turn to a friend before anyone else to discuss an alcohol problem. Approximately 30 percent, however, said they would go to their Resident Advisor (RA) or the Alcohol Education Office to discuss an alcohol problem.

Between 50 to 75 percent of the students responded accurately to a series of alcohol information questions. Alcohol programs, posters, and information in the Manager's Newsletter were recognized by more than 40 percent of those responding. About one-third of the sample were aware of campus Alcoholics Anonymous and AL-ANON groups. In the area of programming, over one-half of the students responding, when given a choice between a kegger without entertainment or another type of program, indicated a preference for the other program.

The results of the evaluation studies which were administered to RAs, upper advisory staff members, and hall managers in the spring of 1976 and again in the spring of 1977 were generally supportive of the Alcohol Education Committee's efforts. Specifically, most respondents indicated that the alcohol education program has had a positive influence on students and that the quality of the information has effectively met staff and student needs. Less than 5 percent of those sampled thought the alcohol abuse program had received too much attention. One of the greatest indicators of support for the program came from an increasing number of student and staff volunteers for the Alcohol Education Committee.

Thus, the overall results of research on the Michigan State University Alcohol Project have been positive. Much of the data have confirmed initial beliefs that alcohol is perceived as a problem by staff and students alike, thatmost students do have a limited amount of accurate information about the effects of alcohol, and also that programming, training, and staff responses to alcohol education through the Alcohol Education Project have been recognized and welcomed.

Results also indicate that increased publicity about campus AA and AL-ANON groups, the specific services of the Alcohol Education Office, and further awareness of alcohol--its effects, impact, and pressures among college students--are important focal points for the future. In addition, we have also seen evidence of a decrease in the amount of damage in our residence halls over the last year. Whether it can be directly attributed to our alcohol education effort is speculative but it is a positive outcome.

SUMMARY

In summary, we have tried to develop a multi-faceted approach to addressing the issue of alcohol use and abuse within our residence hall system. We have encouraged a wide range of creativity in planning informational and social programs which emphasize the responsible use of alcohol and discourage irresponsible use. We have sought to avoid a "prohibitionist" label in promoting our program's efforts. We have also tried to involve local community resources in our program implementation and have included several members of the local AA community in our hall and floor programming. However, our primary purpose has been to keep the issue of responsible drinking and the idea that alcohol use should be a well-thought out behavior constantly in front of students in a variety of subtle, non-threatening and non-sermonizing ways.

As we look to the future, we realize that each year we face a new group of almost 7,000 freshment who are new to making independent decisions on their own drinking. This will continue to be a main target group for alcohol education efforts. We have tried to build in expectations within our staff during our selection and training processes that alcohol education is one of our priorities, so new staff enter with a certain level of commitment to our program. As a final note, I would add that our efforts have not proven particularly expensive. Aside from salaries for our coordinator and trainer, most of the other aspects of our program have been cost-free. So, if you are like most institutions and are operating on a tight budget, we hope this will not be a major deterrent for beginning your own alcohol education program.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Mr. Dennis O'Hara is a graduate assistant and Director of Training for the Alcohol Education Project. Ms. Bonnie Olson is Coordinator of the Alcohol Education Project. Ms. Dawn Hecker is an Administrative Assistant in the Residence Hall Programs Office. Mr. Paul Oliaro is an Area Director in the Residence Hall Programs Office, and Mr. Doug Torrence is a former graduate advisor with the Residence Hall Programs Office. The authors also wish to acknowledge the many contributions to our program by Alcohol Education Committee members, both past and present, and particularly the contributions of Dr. Gary North, Director of the Residence Hall Programs Office, and Dr. Doug Zatechka, former director of the Alcohol Education Project at Michigan State and presently Director of Housing at the University of Nebraska.

For further information, please contact:

Ms. Bonnie Olson
Alcohol Education Project
302 Student Services Building
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824